

West Virginia Wesleyan



LOW RESIDENCY
MASTER OF FINE ARTS
IN CREATIVE WRITING

Student Guidelines Handbook 2012

59 College Avenue
West Virginia Wesleyan College
Buckhannon, WV 26201

www.wvc.edu/academics/gradprograms/MFA/

The light on this page is not bright,
but the light in my mind is.
I felt for a scrap...
I grasped the pen as hard as I could
and wrote four lines....
I put it in a packet
with the others: the Choclat Meunier wrapper,
the mildewed subscription blank,
the soiled brown paper bags smoothed out,
and tucked them all in a little drawer
where I can stretch out my hand
and touch them any time I want to.

--Irene McKinney, from "Her Fascicles"

Wesleyan's MFA Program Founding Director, Irene McKinney was the State Poet Laureate of West Virginia from 1992 until her death in February 2012. Her five books include *Six O'Clock Mine Report*, *Vivid Companion*, and *Unthinkable: Selected Poems 1976-2004*. The MFA faculty is committed to carrying on Irene's vision now and for the future.



WEST VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE

Low Residency Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Student Guidelines Handbook

Buckhannon, WV 26201-2998
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NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

West Virginia Wesleyan College, a private educational institution, is committed to the principle of equal opportunity for all qualified persons, welcomes students of all backgrounds and takes pride in the diversity of its faculty and staff. It assures students of access to all the privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available at the College. West Virginia Wesleyan College strongly supports affirmative action principles and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or religious affiliation in the administration of its educational programs, admissions policies, financial aid programs, athletics, co-curricular activities or other College administered programs.

In accordance with the Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act, complete information regarding campus security policies and campus crime statistics can be obtained from the Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Management.

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THE PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

TYPE OF PROGRAM: Low-Residency

LENGTH OF PROGRAM: 2 Years

TOTAL CREDIT HOURS REQUIRED: 48

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Application Form and Application Fee
2. Writing Sample
3. Letters of Recommendation
4. Transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate coursework
5. A current résumé / vitae



I seem most instinctively to believe in the human value of creative writing, whether in the form of verse or fiction, as a mode of truth-telling, self-expression and homage to the twin miracles of creation and consciousness.

—John Updike

West Virginia Wesleyan is a small liberal arts college in the rural Appalachian region with a tradition of fostering excellent writing. Writers associated with Wesleyan include Breece D’J Pancake, Jayne Anne Phillips, Denise Giardina, Maggie Anderson, Aaron Smith, and Irene McKinney, West Virginia’s former State Poet Laureate and Founding Director of the Program. Past visitors to the campus include Gerald Stern, Lynn Emanuel, Padgett Powell, Jean Valentine, Kevin Canty, and Ann Pancake, among dozens of others. Wesleyan is located in the Allegheny Mountains, near the Monongahela National Forest, Snowshoe and Canaan Valley Ski Resorts, New and Gauley River whitewater rafting outfits, and other cultural and recreational opportunities. Our campus is 100 tree-filled acres situated in Buckhannon, West Virginia, a small town of 7,500.

ADMISSION DETAILS

The Admission Committee will read all applications and make decisions about admittance to the program. The Committee is made up of the director and two writers on faculty. Admission requirements include: a completed Graduate Application form and application fee; a writing sample of twenty pages for fiction or non-fiction, and fifteen poems for poets; two recommendations from knowledgeable and relevant recommenders; an undergraduate degree with a grade point average of 3.00 or above; significant course work in English and writing documented by an official transcript of all undergraduate and graduate coursework; and a current résumé/vitae. The Admission Committee will meet to consider applications on a rolling basis. Students may apply to begin their study at either the Winter (late December-early January) or Summer (early July) Residency. **The application deadline is October 15 for the Winter Residency and March 31 for the Summer Residency.**

For other questions regarding Wesleyan Accreditation, Admission Process, Tuition and Fees, and all institutional policies, refer to West Virginia Wesleyan College Graduate Catalog available online at www.wvwc.edu/academics/gradprograms

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Our Mission

The faculty and administration at West Virginia Wesleyan initiated the low-residency MFA Program to serve the need for older and returning writing students to work toward a degree while continuing their work and outside community life in their own place of residence. We felt that there was a need for a graduate writing program which would allow mature students to earn a degree working with writers who are prominent in their field, and to use the degree to become writers, teachers, and editors. The region itself has been lacking in such learning centers for non-traditional writing students. Public school teachers who may wish to become better writers and to prepare to teach creative writing can profit from this program. For those who wish to pursue their writing with an advisor, but who cannot commit to a degree program, auditing the residency period is an option. And students who have completed a degree may wish to continue attending residencies, or may wish to add a fifth semester.

Commitment to the Appalachian Region

We believe that a course of study with an emphasis on questions of craft and technique in writing and a thorough grounding in literature of the past and present will deepen and enlarge the student writer's talent and mind. Further, our location offers students the unique opportunity to produce and study writing steeped in the Appalachian region, which is rich in its setting in the natural world of mountains and rivers, flora and fauna, social traditions, local music, and art. Although our program fosters fine writing regardless of its subject matter, many of the writers invited to participate in the program address concerns about the region or locate their imaginative works within Appalachia. Several prominent writers have been associated with Wesleyan in the past, and over the years a strong faculty has actively encouraged student writers, maintaining a thriving undergraduate creative writing program, and supporting a stream of exciting writers as visitors to the campus.

Membership in AWP

Wesleyan has been one of the very few undergraduate creative writing programs to become an institutional member of the Associated Writing Programs, the chief organization of writers and writing programs in the country. We have been a member for over ten years, and in our new capacity as a graduate program, we continue that affiliation and subscribe to its list of hallmarks of successful MFA programs, including:

1. A Challenging Workshop
2. Extensive Literary Study
3. Attentiveness to Revision
4. A Variety of Seminars and Workshops
5. Strong Thesis Advising
6. Strong Mentorship
7. Cross-Genre Study
8. Vocational Study Options
9. Accomplished Writers Who Teach Well
10. Stable Faculty
11. A High Retention Rate
12. A Student Handbook
13. Financial Aid
14. Publication by Students and Graduates
15. Strong Leadership
16. Sufficient Autonomy

17. Good Collegial Relations
18. Community Outreach
19. Diligent Quality Control
20. Clear Criteria for Evaluation of Faculty
21. Participation in Professional Networks
22. Administrative Support Staff

(AWP Director's Handbook: Guidelines, Policies, and Information for Creative Writing Programs. 2009)

Further, our membership in AWP entitles our students to copies of *The Writer's Chronicle* and to access to the Job Placement Services they provide. The AWP office will keep transcripts, résumés, and letters of recommendation on file and will mail these to prospective employers. They also post listings of current job openings in teaching, writing, and editing and in administrative positions. (www.awpwriter.org)

Community of Writers

Wesleyan provides an atmosphere that creates a community of writers who mutually enrich each other's life and writing. Our faculty members are practicing writers committed to both the tradition of literature and the craft of writing. Visiting writers are chosen on the basis of their passion for teaching and their accomplishment in their art, as well as their interest in the artistic life of the Appalachian region. Our program prepares students for a dedicated and productive writing life.

Student-Designed Program

The MFA in Creative Writing, a 2-year, 4-semester, low-residency program requiring 48 hours of credit, offers students the opportunity to design their own program in poetry, fiction, or creative non-fiction under the supervision of a faculty advisor and the director. The student's own stated goals form the basis for each semester's writing project, the Critical Essay, and for the terminal Creative Thesis. Each semester begins with a 10-day intensive residency on Wesleyan's campus, after which students return home and carry out their programs of study by correspondence. During the residency, student writers will participate in a scheduled series of craft seminars, workshops, and readings presented by the Wesleyan core faculty and the semester's visiting faculty. Student writers will also present an evening of public readings.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Program of Study Requirements: A minimum of 48 credit hours are required for the MFA degree. Requirements include completion of four consecutive residencies and a fifth thesis-presentation residency, and completion of the following required courses:

Poetry Track: ENG 540 (four times), ENG 545 (four times), ENG 570 (three times), and ENG 650.

Fiction Track: ENG 520 (four times), ENG 525 (four times), ENG 570 (three times), and ENG 650.

Creative Non-Fiction Track: ENG 530 (four times), ENG 535 (four times), ENG 570 (three times), and ENG 650.

(ENG 520, 525, 530, 535, 540, 545 are satisfied during the residency period; ENG 570 and 650 are satisfied during the semester of apprenticeship-model correspondence study.)

A Note about Credit: No partial credit will be given. Twelve hours of credit is awarded for the completion of each residency and semester's work. If a student should need to sit out a semester for personal or work-related reasons, s/he may apply to the Program Director for a **Leave of Absence**, but it is assumed that the student will attend for four consecutive semesters.

ENGLISH 520. 2 hrs. Craft and Theory of Fiction. In this course, various issues of craft and theory in fiction are presented by the fiction faculty, in a format which ranges from lectures to seminars. This course provides an analysis of professional and student work, focusing on a particular issue of craft or theory, including the construction of time-lines, the use of sensory detail, characterization, and narrative structure. *May be repeated for a total of 8 hours credit.*

ENGLISH 540. 2 hrs. Craft and Theory of Poetry. In this course, various issues of craft and theory in poetry are presented by the poetry faculty, in a format which ranges from lecture to short-term seminars. The course provides an analysis of professional and student work, focusing on a particular issue of craft or theory, including traditional verse forms, the use of vernacular speech in poetry, the long poem, the role of place and

region in poetry, and the structure of free verse. *May be repeated for a total of 8 hours credit.*

ENGLISH 530. 2 hrs. Craft and Theory of Creative Non-Fiction.

In this course, various issues of craft and theory in creative non-fiction are presented by the non-fiction faculty in a format which ranges from lectures to seminars. The course provides an analysis of professional and student work, focusing on a particular issue of craft or theory, including the role of memory, structure, characterization, point of view, and detailed description. *May be repeated for a total of 8 hours credit.*

ENGLISH 545. 2 hrs. Poetry Workshop.

This workshop focuses on student writing in the poetic form, which is read and evaluated by the entire class. Students expand their writing and critical skills, and strengthen their knowledge of literary standards. *May be repeated for a total of 8 hours credit.*

ENGLISH 525. 2 hrs. Fiction Workshop.

This course focuses on student fiction writing, which is read and evaluated by the entire class. Students expand their writing and critical skills, and strengthen their knowledge of literary standards. *May be repeated for a total of 8 hours credit.*

ENGLISH 535. 2 hrs. Creative Non-Fiction Workshop.

This course focuses on student writing in memoir, autobiography, creative essay, and nature writing. The work is read and evaluated by the entire class. Students expand their writing and critical skills, and strengthen their knowledge of literary standards. *May be repeated for a total of 8 hours credit.*

ENGLISH 570. 8 hrs. Semester Project in Fiction, Poetry, or

Creative Non-Fiction. Students plan their semester projects with their faculty advisor. The project entails twenty-five hours per week of work on the packets of writing exchanged with the advisor. A booklist of 20-25 books relevant to the craft and theory of the chosen genre will be assembled and documented in an annotated bibliography, five packets of writing will be exchanged throughout the semester, and a final portfolio will be submitted at the semester's end. The faculty advisor may refer the student to other readings in addition to those on the agreed-upon reading list. *May be repeated for a total of 24 hours credit.*

ENGLISH 650. 8 hrs. Thesis Preparation and Presentation. The student will complete the Creative Thesis of publishable quality under the supervision of the faculty advisor. For prose writers, both fiction and non-fiction, the manuscript should be 100 pages or more; for poetry writers, the manuscript should be 50 pages or more. The student will return for a Fifth Residency for at least 3 three days in which a reading will be given from the completed manuscript and a seminar will be taught to peers.

RESIDENCY

Students are required to spend twenty days a year on campus, ten days in July and ten in December-January. They are required to be present for the whole ten-day period and to attend all scheduled residency courses and events: seminars, writing workshops, and readings presented by core and visiting faculty. Students have the option of field study or a travel residency which would substitute for one ten-day session on campus. Wesleyan-sponsored locations include The Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Belize, venues in Western and East Central Europe, or other destinations in the United States, including the Appalachian region itself. The student will be under the supervision of an MFA Faculty trip leader for the development of a curriculum of appropriate literature, place visits, and other activities, and will then work with his/her semester advisor on incorporating the travel project into the semester's work. Other options may be developed with the Program Director and faculty; options include possible internships in publishing, editing, and teaching. Each option is equivalent to one residency, and only one may be substituted for the residency on Wesleyan's campus. Students participate in a total of four 10-day residencies and a final Fifth Residency after the semester they graduate (see the "Fifth Residency" section for more details). Note that evening readings will be open to the public but all other residency activities are for students only.

Seminars

Mornings during the residency are devoted to lecture- or discussion-style seminars on craft, poetics, literature, and contemporary writing. Seminars will be taught by core and/or visiting faculty and also by graduating MFA students. Some teachers will require readings in advance as preparation

for participation in the seminars; students should complete these readings before the residency and bring them to the seminar session. Other teachers will provide handouts of work to be discussed; some will also assign exercises to be completed during the residency. The subjects of the daily seminars will be new each residency, and information on seminar offerings will be sent to students in advance, along with a list of any suggested or required readings. Seminars are interdisciplinary in that students are expected to attend all seminars, whether specific to their genre or not, although some seminars may be offered concurrently, offering students a wider variety of topics to choose from.

Writing Workshops

Afternoons during the residency are devoted to two-hour writing workshops. Students submit work two months in advance of the residency, prompted by the Graduate Enrollment Counselor who will then distribute the work to all workshop participants.

Workshop submissions should be new work that workshop participants have not yet discussed. Students may submit a **maximum of 6 poems and 25 pages of prose**; poetry should be single-spaced, unless a poem requires nontraditional formatting; fiction should be double-spaced and a novel excerpt prefaced by a synopsis of what has preceded it. The pages should be numbered and the author's name should appear the top of each page, in the right hand corner. New students may ask that application material comprise their workshop submission.

Some workshops may deal with multiple forms; most are genre-specific. Students are expected to come to the residency with hard copies of all workshop samples in their genre, having carefully read and prepared comments on their peers' workshop submissions (see the "Workshop Procedures" section for more details).

Workshops are usually taught by several teachers on a rotating basis, or team-taught; this ensures that students will be exposed to multiple approaches and that no single style dominates. Students will have the opportunity of working with several faculty members, as well as benefiting from each other. Much of the learning during residency may develop informally among students and teachers.

In addition to critiquing previously-submitted work, faculty may assign writing prompts or exercises to generate new work. This work will necessarily be in rough draft form, and critiques will need to take that into account, applying less rigorous standards and helping to point the way toward further development. We encourage a non-competitive atmosphere, judging that to be most productive of strong student work. In addition to previously-submitted work and class-generated work, students may bring copies of other writing that they wish to have critiqued in workshop, and the faculty will include it in the schedule if at all possible. In smaller classes of four to six, this should be possible.

Workshop Procedures

The usual and time-honored approach for writing workshops is to ask the student whose work is up for critique to remain silent until everyone has had a chance to speak. This not only prevents the student from going into a defensive mode, but it creates the necessary calm mind needed to listen to and absorb peers' and teachers' remarks and suggestions. The workshop experience is not only about present work; talking in detail about others' work helps to develop a critical vocabulary and a way of seeing that eventually feeds into future work in a beneficial way.

In reading and making notes on the work for workshop, first try to identify the intention of the piece, withholding judgment until that is clear. Describing the work in detail yields surprising insights. Then note where the writer accomplished his or her purpose, and where it fell short. In discussions, articulating questions as opposed to flat statements can lead to broader understanding of the implications of the work. At the end of the critique, the writer whose work is being discussed may wish to ask questions of the group to further delve into possible directions the work might take. If the writer finds him- or herself explaining what the work is "really about," this will indicate that it hasn't yet fulfilled its purpose, and needed changes may present themselves more clearly.

Points for Critique

1. *Decide to hear other people's thoughts. Our usual habit is to listen for a couple of minutes and then decide we already know "where they're coming from," so we stop actively listening and start thinking about what we're going to say next.*
2. *In your own words, paraphrase the work in question.*
3. *After the class has finished speaking, ask the writer some open-ended questions about the work (not "yes" or "no" answers). Most American students are never once asked to enlarge upon, or refine, anything they have just said. The aim here is to keep investigating, to delve deeper into the discussion, to gather more data from the writer, to further discuss reported feelings, and to further understand meaning attached to these feelings. These discussion sessions will often expose more material that the writer will want to include.*
4. *In your own words again, paraphrase what the writer has just answered in response to your questions.*
5. *Finally, ask the writer something like, "Taking these responses into account, where do you want to take this piece of writing?"*

The advantage of this kind of critique is that it can expose and clarify the fact that multiple meanings may exist within a piece of writing, meanings that the writer may not have been aware of, and which can now be developed.

An unfortunate side-effect of the great popularity of writing workshops has been the development of workshop clichés, such as "show, don't tell" and "use more specific details." A recent essay by poet Steve Kowitz examines these clichés ("A Poet's Anti-Rule Book," *Writer's Chronicle*, May/Summer 2011) and argues that such formulaic ways of response may simplify the critique and paralyze the discussion at a single level. Vigilance against such unthinking methods should be a concern for all participants. Comments and suggestions for revision need to be backed up by careful analysis.

The teacher's role in workshop is to moderate the discussion, acting both as participant and director when needed to move it along. The teacher will make certain everyone is heard and that no one voice dominates. The teacher's concern is that the work in question receives a fair scrutiny, one that will advance it and future work.

Students will need to gradually form a critical vocabulary and way of speaking that will do justice to the full range of a particular work, and to monitor themselves on these points:

1. Speak to the work that is in front of you, not a hypothetical work you would write.

2. Try to temporarily suspend your preferences for a certain kind of writing, and place yourself in the position of the writer.

3. Describe the work in detail, as to style, subject, language choices, tone, imagery, and so on.

4. Only after steps 1 – 3 through have been considered, suggest changes and revisions that are in keeping with the perceived intent of the work.

Semester Project Proposal

Before each residency, students should be thinking about what they would like to work on during the semester. On the first day of the residency, each student will be asked to draft a Semester Project Proposal with the faculty advisor; for returning students, this proposal can be based on the updated project plan submitted as part of the self-evaluation at the end of the previous semester. The first advising meeting will take place after students are assigned their faculty advisor at Orientation. Students will be assigned a different advisor each semester and will be able to request an advisor, in conversation with the director and faculty, as they move further into their tenure in the program. Students will have the option of working with same advisor for up to two semesters.

The advisor and/or student may wish to schedule a meeting in the middle of the residency period for further expansion of the proposal; a final meeting for the purpose of finalizing the proposal is scheduled for the last morning of the residency before departure. At this final meeting,

students and advisors will exchange relevant contact information and agree upon deadlines for the semester's work. Although these personal conferences with the advisor are built into the residency schedule for the purpose of planning the semester project, students are encouraged to request further consultation with their advisors or the Program Director if they have questions or concerns.

With the faculty advisor, students will also assemble a **reading list, or bibliography, of 20-25 books for the project**, to be expanded and adjusted in mutual agreement throughout the semester as necessary. It is to be expected that a portion of these books may serve only as reference, while others will provide subjects of close scrutiny. The makeup of the bibliography will be agreed upon by student and advisor, but as a general rule of thumb, approximately one-third should be works on craft, theory, technique, aesthetics, or essays by creative writers in the various genres, and the remaining number should be original works of fiction, poetry, or creative non-fiction.

An excellent resource for the bibliography is the series called "The Art of..." from Graywolf Press, which includes "The Art of Time in Fiction," "The Art of the Poetic Line," "The Art of Recklessness," and other works on craft and theory. Some flexibility is expected; faculty advisors may wish to modify the requirements for the number of books, taking into account particular needs and projects. Handouts of various faculty-recommended reading lists will be available at orientation; these lists are not intended to be strictly adhered to, but are meant to suggest the range of works from which one might choose. During the third semester, the list should be relevant to the Critical Essay, and during the fourth, or Thesis semester, the list may be shorter, since the student will be concentrating solely on the Creative Thesis manuscript.

At the end of the residency, students will write a two to three page **Residency Self-Evaluation**, detailing what they have gained from the residency seminars and workshops, the events they attended and participated in, and how they developed as a writer during this period. This document, along with the finalized **Semester Project Proposal**, must be emailed as an attachment to both the advisor and director **no later than three days after the end of the residency**. Both of these forms can be downloaded from the MFA website: www.wvc.edu/academics/gradprograms/MFA/. Both documents will be kept in the student's file; the self-evaluation will constitute evidence of the student's completion of the residency component, and the proposal

will serve as the advisor/advisee contract for the semester-long project period. Students will also complete a **Residency Program Evaluation** (also available on the MFA website) and submit it to the director 3 days after the residency.

SEMESTER PROJECT

The requirements for the semester's work include five packets of creative and critical written work, to be sent to the advisor approximately every three weeks, and a final portfolio of revisions which will serve as the basis for the advisor's final evaluation of the student's work. **Note that the final, or Thesis, semester follows a different structure (see the "Thesis" section for more details).** The advisor will read and comment on each packet of work in writing and may suggest further readings and/or revisions.; students can expect the advisor's response within a week of packet receipt. **Students are expected to spend twenty-five hours per week on their writing and directed reading.** Correspondence may be by mail, phone, or e-mail; electronic submission of packets is the default unless student or advisor requests hard copy, mailed submissions. These packet exchanges are not online courses, but tutorials which encourage a close, sustained apprenticeship with master writers who have significant publications and reputation in their field. We emphasize the low student-faculty ratio, which will never exceed four to one, and is usually lower. This guarantees a close, sustained level of personal attention.

Writing Packets

During each of the first three semesters, the student will send a packet of writing approximately every three weeks, keeping to the submission schedule agreed upon by both student and advisor during the residency. Punctual submission of packets is important for both the student's pacing of work throughout the semester and the advisor's staggering of packets received from his/her multiple advisees; thus, if a student foresees challenges to making a deadline, s/he should communicate with the advisor to make adjustments. Students who fail to meet deadlines without communication with the advisor **risk a failing grade for the semester.**

The student should keep an ongoing written record of the dates when packets are sent and the contents (including titles of new/ revised work, length/topic of annotations, etc.); this record will be included in the student's Semester Self-Evaluation. Likewise, the advisor should keep a written record of packet contents and receipt dates and should include this record in the student's final evaluation.

Students and advisors may choose to abandon the writing-packet structure during the theThesis Semester, though a regular rhythm of contact should be established (see "Thesis" section for details).

Each of the five writing packets should include these three elements:

1) *A letter on progress:* This letter to the advisor describes the progress of the project, any concerns or questions the student has, any challenges s/he is facing, and it provides space for the student to respond to any elements in the advisor's previous letters and revision suggestions. The letter is not meant to be a throw-away "Here you go!" indicating an attitude of simply handing in an assignment and moving on to the next, but an opportunity for engaging in a true apprenticeship-model exchange as the writing evolves.

2) *Original pieces of fiction, poetry, or non-fiction:* These pieces can be new drafts or revisions of earlier work, though it is expected that the student will not just be recycling old work during his/her MFA study. As a general rule, students should submit both new work and revisions with each packet. Page length or number of poems per packet will vary according to the goals set forth in the Semester Project Proposal, but students are required to submit a minimum of 30 pages of prose or 15 pages of poetry in each final portfolio. Students will be held to these minimums during the Critical Essay Semester as well, in order to ensure an adequate quantity of material as they move into their final semester. Finally, original work should be literary in nature and should avoid any formulaic style (e.g. mass-market genre fiction).

3) Annotations: These annotations (sometimes called critiques) of individual pieces of poetry or prose are short analytic essays of two to four pages. **The student is required to submit a minimum of 15 annotations per semester (during Semesters 1 and 2), so s/he should average 3 per packet.** The student may elect to submit one annotation in one packet and four in a later packet, keeping in mind the semester minimum.

The analytic portion of every semester is largely focused on primary texts, not scholarship, on craft rather than literary theory or cultural history. In the first semesters, annotations help the student learn how to identify basic areas of craft, compile a vocabulary for analyzing imaginative works, develop a clear, serviceable prose style, and read as a writer. Annotations also contribute to the dialogue between student and advisor, providing quick illustrative reference for issues raised by the creative work, and the depth of insight or conviction in particular annotations may signal promising Critical Essay material.

The subjects of annotations will be decided upon mutually by advisor and student and should be directly relevant to the student's work. Advisors' approaches to the annotations may vary, but, broadly speaking, these short essays do not need to incorporate secondary sources and can take the form of explications of a text, commentary on craft or theory, or whatever point of focus the individual advisor and student agree upon. Specific readings of a text may examine matters of tone, plot, imagery, line breaks, setting, rhyme scheme, juxtaposition, disjunction, and the like. This writing hones analytical skills and clarifies craft and technique which the student may put to use in his or her own writing. Note that, **during the third semester, a reduced minimum of 4 annotations** is required due to the focus on writing the Critical Essay; students are encouraged to use these annotations to generate rough draft material for the Essay (see the section on "Critical Essay" for details). Also, students may or may not be required to submit annotations during the Thesis Semester--this will be mutually decided upon by student and advisor.

Note that the advisor may request revisions of annotations throughout the semester if the student demonstrates a lack of depth in his/her analytical engagement of the text.

Sample Template for the Annotation

Passionate engagement with readings is both instructive and important, but the goal of the annotation is not to gush or to attack: the goal is to get down to the nuts-and-bolts reason *why* a piece evokes particular emotions and responses. The goal of this exercise is to learn to be a better writer. As you write each annotation, voice your feelings and opinions only if you can substantiate these responses with solid craft analysis. If your advisor determines that your annotations are turning into rants or airy claims full of unsubstantiated judgments, s/he may ask you to create an artificial separation in your writing, requiring you to set aside feelings and opinions and discuss only how the poem, essay, etc is built. Once you and your advisor agree that you've mastered reading for craft, you can abandon this artificial separation and write more intuitively.

Include: your name, author's name, title, publisher and date of publication, annotation number in the semester series (Annotation 1, 2,...), date of annotation

1. Write a brief synopsis of the poem, story, essay, book, etc.
2. Describe the structure and organization (e.g. a braided essay, an achronological story, a meditative lyric...).
3. Define the major and any minor themes.
4. Describe the point of view of the speaker/narrator.
5. Make a character list (if appropriate to the genre), with brief one-sentence backstories for each (major and minor characters).
6. Choose one or more elements of craft as lenses through which to view the piece. Some options for analysis:

--How does the writer create characters?
--Define a craft term and explore that term through a close reading.
--How does the piece move from the personal to the universal?
--What specific details/images stay in your mind? Why? How do these small details lead to larger ideas, or characterizations?
--Does any image repeat? If so, why did the author choose it? Does it carry metaphorical significance? Is it transformed in any way from beginning to end?

- Find examples of abstract and concrete language. What are the effects?
- Identify passages of exposition (summary/"narrative of thought"/ meditation on experience) and passages of scene (narrative sequence that unfolds around the reader/full of sense detail)—describe the balance of exposition and scene.
- How does the dialog work? Does it accomplish more than one thing?
- How does the writer create a sense of place?
- Describe the rhythms, syntax, diction—reading aloud can help you get a sense of the writer's voice.
- Investigate line breaks/line length.
- Why does the piece begin and end where it does? Is there an echo between the opening and closing?
- Break down the piece by stanza, paragraph, or section. How does each piece act as a "building block"? How does the writer create dramatic tension or interest with these building blocks?
- How do the transitions work?
- Are there any moments that seem weak or clichéd to you? If so, why? How would you change those moments?

(You will likely find other options for analysis in your craft books; focus most keenly on areas in which you feel you currently struggle.)

7. Close your annotation by responding to one or both of these prompts:

- Now that you have read and considered this work in the context of your own ongoing writing, how does it change or deepen your understanding of your own work? Does it serve as a model for you?
- Compare and contrast the authorial choices in this work with your choices for your own project. Do they confirm your choices, or cause you to reconsider them? How? Be specific.

End-of-Semester Materials

At each end of the student's first three semesters, s/he submits a final portfolio and evaluations which will be kept in the student's file. The grading system is pass/fail (see "Grading & Evaluation" for more details). The advisor will submit a written evaluation of the student's work for the semester. After consultation between faculty and the Program Director, and on completion of all requirements for the semester, eight hours of credit will be awarded, in addition to the four hours of credit earned after successful completion of the residency. The student will be notified of this by mail, and grades will be available for student review in their account on Web Advisor (accessible through the main page of Wesleyan's website).

A single-sheet **Residency & Semester Submission Checklist** is available as a PDF on the MFA website: www.wvwc.edu/academics/gradprograms/MFA/ This checklist will be helpful at the semester's end as you gather your final materials for submission. You will also want to consult the current academic calendar for specific due dates (also available on the MFA website). **Students should stay up-to-date on deadlines; those who fail to meet deadlines risk losing credit and/or advancement.**

Materials to be submitted electronically (unless hard copies are requested) to both the advisor and director at the end of the semester include:

FINAL PORTFOLIO (submitted Semesters 1-3 as a single Word Document or PDF by the End of Semester Portfolio Due Date as specified on the current academic calendar) which includes:

- Revisions of original work** submitted throughout the semester (minimum 30 pp prose, 15 pp poetry)
- One revised annotation** (Semesters 1 & 2 only)
- Annotated bibliography** of the 20-25 books read and consulted during the semester; the annotation, or description, of each book should be approximately 50-100 words. Note that, with this assignment in mind, students may want to write entries for the bibliography progressively, as they complete books during the semester, while the text is freshest in the mind.

CRITICAL ESSAY (Semester 3 only, by the End of Semester Portfolio Due Date) (submitted as a PDF separate from portfolio; see “Critical Essay” section for guidelines)

SEMESTER SELF-EVALUATION (downloadable form on the MFA website; due by Portfolio Due Date): This evaluation provides space for students to summarize the semester work, evaluate achievement of project goals, look forward to the next semester’s work by updating the project plan, and submit a request to work with a particular advisor the following semester.

SEMESTER EVALUATION OF FACULTY ADVISOR (downloadable form on the MFA website; due by Portfolio Due Date): This evaluation is designed to ensure that the program continues to provide the quality of advising that students expect and deserve. Students submit this evaluation to the **director only**; the director will share the evaluation with the advisor unless the student requests that it be kept confidential (the director’s advisees submit the form to the Graduate Dean). *Students and faculty are encouraged to contact the director (or Graduate Dean, when appropriate) at any time during the semester if they feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied with the student-advisor exchange.*

THESIS MANUSCRIPT (final semester only; see “Thesis” section for guidelines)

EXIT SURVEY (downloadable form on the MFA website; completed and submitted after final semester only; due one week after the Fifth Residency)

EMAIL POLICY & INSTRUCTIONS

Your West Virginia Wesleyan Email Account

It is very important that you check your Wesleyan email regularly since pertinent information from the College is shared via this tool, along with your AWP membership info and materials from your advisor and the director. The program cannot be responsible for information that you miss due to neglecting your email account. If you prefer to use an account other than the one the College issues, it is possible to create a permanent forward on your Wesleyan email account so that all WVWC email is routed to the account you check regularly. Please note that the College will **always** use your Wesleyan account, so to receive Wesleyan email at an email address that you prefer, you must place a permanent forward on the Wesleyan account. **To place a permanent forward on your Wesleyan account:**

1. Log into your Wesleyan email account.
2. Click the Gear icon in the upper right corner and select Mail Settings from the menu.
3. Click the Forwarding POP/IMAP tab. Under Forwarding, click the Add a forwarding address button. Enter the desired address and click OK. This causes a confirmation email to be sent to the account that you specified. You must open that email and click the confirmation link.
4. Once you have done that, go back into the Mail Settings then Forwarding POP/IMAP section of the WVWC Gmail account.
5. Under Forwarding, elect to Forward a copy of incoming mail to (theAddressYouSpecified) and choose the option desired for the WVWC copy. If you don't want to use the WVWC account, you should opt to delete it.
6. Finally, click the Save Changes button at the bottom of the page.

If you have trouble setting a permanent forward on your Wesleyan account, please contact the Help Desk at 304.473.8877.

GRADING & EVALUATION

As stated above, the grading system is pass/fail. It is the belief of the faculty and administration that in an arts program such as the MFA, the practice of written evaluations provides a more comprehensive overview of the student's accomplishment and progress than traditional letter grades. The advisor's written report at the end of each semester gives the student, as well as the student's next advisor, assessment of the work which may indicate directions for future work and progress. In addition, faculty will write a mid-term evaluation to aid the student in assessing his or her progress and to keep the director informed of any concerns or problems. This evaluation does not form part of the student's permanent record, but the end-of-semester evaluation will go into the student's permanent file in the MFA Program Director's office as part of an evaluative transcript.

For the residency period, a passing grade requires attendance to all activities; thorough preparation for seminars and workshops; serious, graduate-level engagement in discussion and exercises; and prompt submission of the Residency Self-Evaluation and the Semester Project Proposal to both advisor and director three days after the residency.

Evaluation of semester work will likely vary with each advisor and each genre, but general areas for Pass/Fail criteria include:

--Punctuality and thoroughness of submission of materials (see the Residency & Semester Submission Checklist for a breakdown of due dates and submission details; available as a PDF at www.wvwc.edu/academics/gradprograms/MFA/).

--Realization of the goals set forth in the Semester Project Proposal and evolved in conversation with the advisor throughout the semester.

--Criteria specific to creative work:

--Originality: uniqueness and strength of voice, vividness of imagery and details, level of surprise and the thwarting of the reader's expectations, literary merit and avoidance of any formulaic style (e.g. mass-market genre fiction)

--Emotional and intellectual potency

--Structural development: depth, level of subtext (narrative arc if appropriate to genre)

--Integration of instruction from craft analysis and readings, advisor feedback, residency seminars and workshops

--Strength of initial drafts and level of revision in subsequent drafts: Significant revision beyond line editing is expected at the graduate level, even if a student comes into the program with a body of work.

--Polish: attention to grammar, spelling, and formatting

--Criteria specific to critical work

(Annotations and Critical Essay):

--Overall analysis: depth of thought and uniqueness of insight

--Organization and clarity

--Application of theory and craft studies

--Support of claims: privileging discussion of the craft elements of a work over reliance on personal opinions of like/dislike

--Focus and specificity

--Polish: attention to grammar, spelling, and formatting

--Integration of sources (for Critical Essay)

--Adherence to guidelines set forth in this handbook

CRITICAL ESSAY

Description

During the third semester the student will submit a longer critical work, to be planned with the faculty advisor during the residency, and approved by the Program Director. As an extension of the critical inquiry the student has practiced in the writing of annotations, this longer work will foreground the student's own writerly preoccupations and will thus address writers and craft/theoretical issues relevant to the student's work. We use the term "critical," although strictly speaking, these essays are not the scholarly texts usually indicated by the term. Instead, they are writerly examinations and meditations on works of literature, perhaps canonical works, but more often contemporary ones, and they afford the space to explore some aspect of another writer's, or group of writers', work with close scrutiny. The goal of the Critical Essay is to examine a work from the inside, reading like a writer, not solely as a reader. This emphasis results in a much more personalized essay that develops a coherent argument wherein the student writer's voice and interests come to the forefront. While the tone and approach of the essay will be less formal and more personal than the typical scholarly essay, it should be no less rigorous in thought.

The student's specific plan for completing the Essay will be determined in conversation with his/her advisor; however, students are encouraged to tackle the Essay early in the semester and not put it off.

The Critical Essay can, but does not have to, serve as a basis for the seminar to be taught to MFA peers at the Fifth Residency following the student's final semester (see "Fifth Residency" section for more details).

The third semester's bibliography should be directly connected to the Critical Essay, including some works of craft analysis or literary review that can provide models for the kind of writing the essay requires. During this semester, students are required to maintain the level of creative output consistent with Semesters 1 and 2 (final portfolio minimums of 30 pp prose, 15 pp poetry). However, fewer annotations are required as students dedicate their analytical faculties to the Critical Essay. **A minimum of four annotations** should be submitted during the semester in addition to the Critical Essay draft/s; students are encouraged to use these annotations for the generation of rough draft material for the Essay.

There are many topics and approaches that are possible for the Essay. Possibilities include, but are not limited to: a discussion of some aspect of craft, an exploration of a particular literary form or genre, a survey of trends in a specific literary period, an analysis of a particular author's, or group of authors', work. Here are some sample essay titles:

- Strategies for Subverting Sentimentality in the Poetry of Mothering
- The Inner Lives of Characters
- Crafting Credible Endings: A Study of Raymond Carver
- C.D. Wright and American Prison Poetry
- The Poetry of Trauma
- Tracing Literary Lineage: A Comparison of Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* and Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Arch Bishop*
- The Thin Line Between Memoir and Autobiographical Fiction in the Work of Bobbie Ann Mason

Guidelines

The final version of the Critical Essay should:

- be submitted electronically as an emailed PDF attachment to both the advisor and director by the End of Semester Portfolio Due Date (you may submit it earlier).
- have undergone at least one full revision incorporating the advisor's feedback on the submitted draft/s.
- run between 20 and 25 double-spaced pages.
- use a standard 12-point font with 1-inch margins.

- include page numbers in the upper right-hand corner (except on title page).
- adhere to the Modern Language Association (MLA) Handbook's current guidelines for citations (guidelines available online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>).
- include a standard bibliography that also adheres to MLA guidelines; the bibliography will include both primary sources and books of literary criticism and/or craft. (*This bibliography is not a substitute for the complete annotated bibliography to be included in your third-semester final portfolio.*)
- begin with a **title page** that includes the following: Critical Essay title, student name, advisor name, semester date (i.e., Spring 2012) and the following statement: *Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at West Virginia Wesleyan College.* (See sample below; please note that the title page should not be paginated but the rest of the essay should be.)

<p>THE INNER LIVES OF CHARACTERS</p> <p>By John Doe</p> <p>Advisor: Jane Doe Fall 2012</p> <p>Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at West Virginia Wesleyan College</p>

THESIS

Description

The capstone of the MFA degree requirements is the Creative Thesis, a book-length manuscript of poetry, fiction, or creative non-fiction generated or substantially revised during the student's tenure in the program. The fourth semester's work will focus on writing and revising this manuscript. Quality, of course, matters more than quantity, but the manuscript should represent a completed, realized work of publishable quality and length. In fiction and non-fiction the minimum length requirement is **100 pages**, and in poetry the minimum length is **50 pages**, although some variation may be permitted, depending on the structure and intent of the work.

The Thesis Semester involves the student in a culminating, mature apprenticeship that is tailored to his/her creative process. Thus, during this semester, the student and advisor decide together whether or not submitted annotations will be part of the semester's work, and also whether or not to subscribe to the writing-packet structure of the first three semesters. A regular rhythm of contact with letters of exchange is essential, but the student and advisor are free to establish whatever rhythm best serves the successful completion of the Thesis manuscript.

Midway through the fourth semester (at the end of the 8th week), a draft of approximately **half of the projected manuscript** should be completed and submitted electronically to the advisor and secondary reader, two of the members of the Thesis Committee. After reviewing half of the manuscript, the advisor may wish to consult with the director and/or other committee members at this point, concerning the merits of the work in progress. Committee members and the director may offer suggestions and editorial comments on the manuscript.

The full Thesis Committee is comprised of four readers: the **advisor** (who is requested by student in conversation with faculty), the **secondary reader** (who is a member of the core or visiting faculty and who is assigned by the director), the **director**, and an **outside reader** (who is also assigned by the director, is an impartial

reader, is an experienced published writer, and who will be familiar with the program standards and expectations, though s/he will not have the power to assign a Pass/Fail grade to the Thesis; the outside reader is not on MFA faculty and is unknown to the student, though the reader may identify him- or herself in the written response to the manuscript).

At the end of the 8th week, the Thesis student also submits a **seminar proposal** that s/he develops with the Thesis advisor; the seminar will be taught to fellow MFA students at the Fifth Residency. This proposal offers a brief description of the class format and goals, along with any assigned advanced reading. The graduating-student seminar topic may evolve out of the subject matter of the student's Critical Essay, or may undertake new concerns and interests, but in all cases should be pertinent to the student's own creative work and the issues it raises. Thesis students will also deliver a reading from their manuscripts at this final residency (see "Fifth Residency" section for details).

At the end of the fourth semester, on the Portfolio Due Date specified on the academic calendar, the **First Deposit** of the completed, carefully-edited manuscript (see guidelines below) should be submitted to all readers on the Thesis Committee. (The director is responsible for forwarding the manuscript to the anonymous outside reader.) The student will also submit the signatory **Cover Page** to the director at this time (see guidelines below).

In addition to the Thesis manuscript, the fourth and final semester requires a **Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography** of all books read and consulted during the student's four semesters of work, whether for semester projects or for residency participation. Each work should be briefly described (in 50-100 words) and citations should follow MLA Handbook guidelines (available online). The Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography is submitted as part of the First Deposit and should also include entries of books read during the Thesis Semester (a separate annotated bibliography for the Thesis Semester is not required).

The Thesis Committee will review the First Deposit of the manuscript, and will then confer and submit written evaluations of the Thesis to the director who will compile these evaluations for the student's permanent file. The director will share the compiled evaluations with the student no later than three weeks before the Fifth Residency. The student will then revise the manuscript according to the committee's feedback and submit the **Final Deposit** to the advisor and director no later than one week before the Fifth Residency.

The writing faculty and the Program Director will determine if the Thesis manuscript is of publishable quality, and if so, and if all other requirements are met, the MFA degree will be awarded. The Thesis student's final Pass/Fail grade for the Thesis project will remain an "I" (Incomplete) until receipt of the Final Deposit and completion of the Fifth Residency. Pending the committee's recommendation, Thesis students finishing in Spring may participate in Wesleyan's May Commencement, but the MFA degree will not be finalized until August, on the first degree-conferring date to follow the students' Fifth Residency. Thesis students finishing in Fall may participate in the May Commencement that follows their thesis completion and will have their MFA degree finalized that May.

If the writing faculty determines that a student is not prepared for the Thesis Semester—as evidenced by lack of quality or quantity in creative and/or critical work—they may require the student to enroll in an additional semester before advancing to the Thesis Semester. Additionally, if the Thesis is not accepted by the committee, the student may be required to enroll in a fifth semester, and may then re-submit the revised Thesis. However, every effort of the faculty and director will be made to assure that any problems will be corrected before the Thesis arrives at that stage.

Guidelines

*Note that a single-sheet **Residency & Semester Submission Checklist** is available as a PDF on the MFA website: www.wvwc.edu/academics/grad-programs/MFA/ This checklist will be helpful as you gather and submit your Thesis materials. You will also want to consult the current academic calendar (also on the website) for specific dates.*

FIRST DEPOSIT OF THE THESIS MANUSCRIPT:

- should be submitted electronically as an emailed single PDF or Word attachment to the Thesis Committee (advisor, secondary reader, and director who will also forward the ms to the outside reader) by the End of Semester Portfolio Due Date.
- should have 2-inch left-hand margins; all other margins 1 inch.
- should include page numbers in the upper right-hand corner (except for Title Page).
- should follow MLA Handbook guidelines in all technical matters (guidelines online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>).
- should be carefully edited.
- should include (in this order):
 - **Title Page** (with no page number in the corner): including title, name, month and year submitted, and an **Abstract of the Volume** (i.e., a 50-150 word description of the contents of the Thesis manuscript, to be used for library cataloging purposes) (See Title Page sample below).
 - **Dedication** (optional).
 - **Acknowledgements** (optional).
 - **Table of Contents** (See sample below).
 - Book-length collection of your **original creative work** completed or substantially revised while in the program. Minimum requirements: 100 double-spaced pages (fiction and non-fiction); 50 pages (poetry) single-spaced, except where stylistic concerns require a different format.
 - **Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography:** ordered alphabetically and prepared in MLA Style, with a 50-100 word description for each text; including all books and articles read during the student's tenure in the program, whether for the semester project or residency participation; this bibliography must be included in the pagination and should be listed in the Table of Contents.

Sample Title Page:

THE DEED TO ARCHER HOUSE
By Shirley Smith
April 2012

ABSTRACT OF THE VOLUME

This creative thesis contains five linked short stories set in Eastern Kentucky in the 1970s. The stories explore mother-daughter relationships and race relations in rural Kentucky during this time period. Of the five stories, four were conceived of and written while I was a student in the program. The fifth, although composed prior to my MFA study, has been substantially revised in recent semesters. The stories are arranged here to follow a chronological progression.

Sample Table of Contents:

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COVER PAGE OF THE THESIS MANUSCRIPT:

- should be submitted electronically as an emailed single PDF or Word attachment to the director by the Portfolio Due Date
- should include title, name, month and year submitted, signature lines, and the following statement: *Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at West Virginia Wesleyan College* (See Cover Page sample below).
- Two copies of the Cover Page will be signed (pending approval) by the faculty members on the Thesis Committee and will then be submitted to the director. Upon receipt of the student's Final Deposit of the Thesis Manuscript, the director will sign both copies of the cover page—one copy will be returned to the student; the other will be included with the hard copy of the Thesis to be filed in the library archives.

Sample Cover Page:

<p>THE DEED TO ARCHER HOUSE By Shirley Smith April 2012</p>	
<p>Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at West Virginia Wesleyan College</p>	
_____ Faculty Advisor, Jane Dug	_____ Secondary Reader, John Doe
	_____ Program Director, Jen Doig

FINAL DEPOSIT OF THE THESIS MANUSCRIPT:

- should be submitted electronically as an emailed single PDF (only) attachment to the advisor and director 1 week before the student's Fifth Residency.
- should have undergone any revisions to the First Deposit as required by the Thesis Committee before final submission.
- should adhere to the same formatting guidelines required for First Deposit and include the same materials in the same order.
- will, upon approval, be submitted by the director to be printed, bound, and archived in the campus library (See note below on archiving procedures).
- **Note that the degree cannot be awarded until the director has received the Final Deposit, along with semester evaluations, and the student has completed the Fifth Residency.**

ARCHIVING PROCEDURES FOR MFA THESES:

The director will submit all Thesis manuscripts to be printed and bound for the library archives and will include in the archive a digital CD compilation of the theses of each graduating cohort for the purpose of backup only (CD is not for borrowers). A copy of the following set of instructions, signed by the director, will be submitted to the archivist with each set of bound MFA theses:

Instructions for Library Archives Deposit of MFA Theses

1. One (1) printed and bound copy of each MFA Thesis is to be shelved in the Archives for the purposes of preservation and may be loaned out to approved borrowers but should not be removed from the Archives room.
2. Under no circumstances is any Thesis to be scanned into an electronic format by the Library or any other third party for the purpose of circulation; although a CD backup will be filed with the theses of each graduating cohort, this CD is for backup purposes only and is not to be checked out by any borrower.
3. The work contained in each Thesis and all content thereof is protected by federal copyright law, and the Author (MFA Student), as copyright holder, maintains several exclusive rights, including the right to make reproductions, to distribute the Thesis, and to create derivative works. Submission of this work does NOT convey any rights to scan, copy, distribute, transmit, display, publish, sell, donate, electronically store, or reproduce the Thesis in any form including print, audio, and any and all current or future electronic or new media, except for those limitations expressly allowed by United States copyright.

FIFTH RESIDENCY

The process of MFA study involves a gradual shift from apprenticeship, with its natural dependence on a mentor, to increased self-confidence, self-sufficiency as writers, and relationships with peers. That shift is formalized during the Fifth Residency. After completing four residencies, the student returns for a fifth and final residency of at least three days, during which s/he gives a 20-minute reading from the completed manuscript, and teaches a seminar to MFA peers on a subject of his or her choosing. The Fifth Residency takes place during the 10-day residency that follows a student's Thesis Semester.

Graduating students are welcome to attend the full residency, but are **required to attend for only three days**; students should arrange to have their stay include the evening of the closing graduation banquet. Students schedule their residency stay beforehand so that room and board can be planned; they are not charged tuition but pay a pro-rated fee for room and board. Graduating students may sit in on seminars and readings and participate in residency discussions, though they do not participate in the writing workshops of continuing students.

At the end of the 8th week of the Thesis student's semester, s/he submits a seminar proposal that s/he develops with the Thesis advisor--a brief description of the class format and goals, along with any assigned advanced reading. The director approves the description and distributes it to the other students, along with the descriptions of faculty seminars, before the residency. The graduating-student seminar topic may evolve out of the subject matter of the student's Critical Essay, or may undertake new concerns and interests, but in all cases should be pertinent to the student's own creative work and the issues it raises.

Graduating-student seminars will be **one hour in length, leaving 15 minutes afterward for questions** from attending faculty and students. The Thesis advisor, secondary reader, and—when possible—the director will attend the seminar. The student can expect the attending faculty to raise questions during the seminar that allow the student to incorporate thoughts on his/her Thesis manuscript. Faculty may inquire about connections between the seminar material and the student's imaginative work, the evolution and nature of the student's aesthetic, salient influences, etc. **Attending faculty will complete a written evaluation of the student's seminar, and these evaluations will be compiled for the student.**

At the residency prior to a student's Thesis semester, MFA faculty will provide final-semester students with instruction and resources regarding the pedagogy of creative writing; students may also want to consult the "Pedagogy" section on AWP's website for topics of interest: www.awpwriter.org

The graduating student's final Pass/Fail grade for the final credits earned during Thesis project completion will remain an "I" (Incomplete) until the receipt of the Final Deposit and the completion of the Fifth Residency. Once all requirements are satisfied, the final grades will be submitted to the Registrar and the MFA degree will be finalized on the first degree-conferring date to follow the students' Fifth Residency—for Thesis students finishing in Spring, the degree is finalized in August; for students finishing in Fall, the degree is finalized the following May.

Some students may also opt for and enroll in a fifth full 10-day residency and semester project course to gain further help with a manuscript or to deepen their knowledge. In these cases, they will fulfill all other residency and semester requirements, even though they have completed the degree.

Also, in rare cases, an additional residency and semester may result if the writing faculty requires an unprepared student to repeat a third semester before advancing to the fourth, or if the Thesis advisor and the director require a student to enroll in a fifth semester of course work before awarding the degree if the student's Thesis material is lacking in quality or quantity.

One week after the student's Fifth Residency, s/he submits a final **Exit Survey** (form available on the MFA website) to the director to offer an overall assessment of his/her MFA experience.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Four Semesters of supervised work, earning a minimum of 48 credit hours*
- 2. Five Residencies. The Fifth Residency may be shorter and is devoted to teaching a seminar and presenting a graduate reading.*
- 3. Critical Essay (20-25 pages)*
- 4. Creative Thesis (100-page minimum for fiction and non-fiction; 50-page minimum for poetry)*
- 5. Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography*
- 6. Submission of the Application For Degree form one semester before intended graduation*
- 7. Payment of the \$125 graduation fee*

The student's committee will meet and review all materials and files, and if a consensus is reached, the MFA will be awarded.

FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES & CONTACT INFORMATION

Wesleyan's MFA core faculty is made up of six creative writers, including the Program Director, and two to four additional visiting writers each semester. They are all published writers of some standing in the writing community and are experienced teachers of literature, creative writing courses, and workshops. The factor that brings them together as a group is their commitment to excellent writing, love of literature, and passion for teaching. The core faculty provides a stable center for students, and the visiting faculty brings variety to the program.

JESSIE VAN EERDEN, Director:
vaneerden@wwc.edu (304) 473-8329

Jessie is Assistant Professor of English and author of the novel *Glorybound* (WordFarm, 2012). Her essays and short fiction have appeared in a wide variety of publications, including *The Oxford American*, *Bellingham Review*, *Rock & Sling*, *The Literary Review*, *Now and Then: The Appalachian Magazine*, *The River Teeth Reader*, and others. Her prose has also been included in *Best American Spiritual Writing* and *Red Holler: An Anthology of Contemporary Appalachian Literature*. Her honors include the Milton Fellowship from Image and Seattle Pacific University for work on a first novel, and she was Edwin Ford Piper Memorial Scholar at the University of Iowa, where she received her MFA in Nonfiction.

MARK DEFOE: defoe@wwc.edu (304) 473-8701

Mark is Professor Emeritus at West Virginia Wesleyan. His ninth chapbook, *Ten Scenes with Mocking Bird*, was the 2009 Tennessee Chapbook Award winner. His eight other books are *Bringing Home Breakfast* (Black Willow, 1983); *Palmate* (Pringle Tree Press, 1988); *AIR* (Green Tower Press, 1998); *Aviary* (Pringle Tree, 2001); *The Green Chair* (Pringle Tree, 2003); *Mark Defoe's Greatest Hits* (Pudding House, 2004); *The Rock and the Pebble* (Pringle Tree, 2006); and *Weekend Update* (Main Street Rag, 2008). His work has been included in over twenty anthologies, including *Coal: A Poetry Anthology* (Blair Mountain) and *Wild Sweet Notes: Fifty Years of West Virginia Poetry* (Publisher's Place). His magazine publications include *Poetry*, *Yale Review*, *Paris Review*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Salmagundi*, and several others. He is a former Bread Loaf Scholar, and his work has received prizes and recognition from *Appalachian Heritage*, *The Atlanta Review*, and others. He has received two Artists Fellowships from the state of West Virginia. Mark earned his doctorate at the University of Denver.

DEVON MCNAMARA: mcnamara@wwvc.edu (304) 473-8243

Devon is Professor of English and has taught writing in schools, prisons, and reform facilities in West Virginia and many Midwestern states. Her poems, essays, interviews, and reviews have appeared in *Hiram Poetry Review* where she has also been a Contributing Editor, *The Laurel Review*, *Dark Horse*, *Boston Poetry and Fiction*, *Trellis*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. Her poems have been performed by dancers from The Dayton Ballet and the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, with whom she worked collaboratively. She has conducted six cultural tours of The Republic of Ireland for writers and students of literature, history, and art, and has also launched the MFA Ireland Residency. She was a recent participant in the Creative Writing Summer Programme at Oxford University. Devon earned her doctorate at New York University.

RICHARD SCHMITT: schmitt@wwvc.edu (304) 473-8853

Richard is Associate Professor of Creative Writing and English. His stories have appeared in *Puerto Del Sol*, *Gulf Coast*, *Blackbird*, and *Cimarron Review*, among others. He is the author of a critically acclaimed novel, *The Aerialist*. His work has been included in *New Stories from the South: The Year's Best, 1999*. He is a graduate of the Warren Wilson Low-Residency MFA Program, and his work earned him a National Endowment for the Arts Grant.

DOUG VAN GUNDY: vangundy_d@wwvc.edu (304) 473-8329

Doug is Assistant Professor of English. His first book of poetry, *A Life Above Water*, was published in 2007, and his poems and essays have appeared in *The Oxford American*, *Ecotone*, and *The Fretboard Journal*. He is a graduate of the low-residency Program at Goddard. In addition to writing, he is an acclaimed traditional musician, playing fiddle, guitar, and banjo.

ERIC WAGGONER: waggoner@wwvc.edu (304) 473-8240

Eric is Associate Professor of English and has written film and music journalism for a variety of publications, including *The Village Voice*. His music writing has appeared on MTV.com and in the collection *Kill Your Idols: A New Generation of Rock Writers Considers the Classics*. He is currently a contributing writer for *Magnet* magazine. Eric earned his doctorate at Arizona State University.

VISITING FACULTY

SARA PRITCHARD. Her novel *Crackpots* was a New York Times Notable Book, and it received the Katharine Bakeless Nason Prize for fiction. She is the author of a short story collection, *Lately* (2007), and has published fiction in *Antietam Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Louisville Review*, *Northwest Review*, and others. She teaches in the low-residency program at Wilkes University, as well as at Wesleyan.

KAREN MCELMURRAY. Her memoir *Surrendered Child: A Birth Mother's Journey*, was an AWP Award Winner for Creative Nonfiction. Her novels are *The Motel of the Stars*, Editor's Pick by *Oxford American*, and *Strange Birds in the Tree of Heaven*, winner of the Chaffin Award for Appalachian Writing. Other stories and essays have appeared in *Iron Horse*, *Kenyon Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and *Riverteeth*, and in the anthologies *An Angle of Vision*, *Listen Here*, *Dirt*, and *To Tell the Truth*. Her writing has been supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the North Carolina Arts Council, and the Kentucky Foundation for Women. She has taught in the MFA Program at Georgia College, where she has been Nonfiction Editor for Arts and Letters, and in the low-residency MFA at Murray State University, as well as at Sewanee's School of Letters.

SAMPLE RESIDENCY SEMINAR DESCRIPTIONS

POETRY AND THE BODY. Irene McKinney. 2-day Seminar. Irene explored the role of the body in contemporary poetry by examining the work of Sylvia Plath, Sharon Olds, Galway Kinnell, Gerald Stern, and 3 or 4 younger poets. Her key questions: Can the body stand in for matters of the spirit, or not? Have we transferred what were once religious or spiritual concerns off onto the physical body? When is this successful, and when not?

THE LONG POEM IN ENGLISH. Eric Waggoner. 2-day Seminar. Long poems test the reader's endurance. They also test the writer – Can I sustain this effect over time and space? Can I shape the entire piece into a unified arc? How can I tell when a project is beginning to demand a longer form? How do I begin to build a long-form poem from the ground up? Out of what individual pieces can I create this extended performance? When should I modulate the tone or the rhythm of the poem? And – importantly – how much is too much? This class provides a setting in which writers can ask these questions of themselves and fellow writers during the composition process, and in which the writer can also spend time with multi-part and book-length poems by other poets, mostly contemporary. From William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore to Charles Olson and Jorie Graham. Coursework and assignments will divide fairly evenly between the critical and the creative.

LAND LIGHT, SEA LIGHT, HUMAN DWELLINGS. Devon McNamara. 2-day Seminar. What did you grow up looking at and where? Did you live at sea level? In the mountains? Small Midwestern town? The indoor outdoors of a great city? How does exploring where your imagery comes from unlock the visual power of concentrated memory to reveal where your piece of writing is going, to charge its rhythms, and intensify its shape in the mind's eye and heart? Together we'll study and discuss the role of image in poetry, focusing on the ways its energies can derive from landscape, waterscape, cities, roads and towns, where remembrance, longing, insight, and our infinite feelings and intelligences reside. Handouts of poems by Czeslaw Milosz, Gerald Stern, Eavan Boland, Seamus Heaney, Philip Levine, and others will be supplied during the sessions. Required Reading: Jane Hirschfield, *Nine Gates: Entering the Mind of Poetry* (HarperCollins, 1997).

THE HILLBILLY SPEAKS OF RIVERS. Doug Van Gundy. 1-day Seminar. The Appalachian poetry of James Wright. Much is written about Wright's portrayal of the industrial Midwest, and his affinity with marginalized figures, but very little has been mentioned regarding the Appalachian nature of his work. We will compare Wright's work with other "Appalachian" poets and explore the themes of poverty, history, place, and self-reliance in Wright's poetry.

THE MUSIC OF POETRY. Mark Defoe. 1-day Lecture. A review of those poetic techniques that give poetry its symbiotic connection with music – rhyme, meter, beat, rhythm and all the sonic devices available to a poet in writing a poem.

ASPECTS OF 3rd PERSON POINT OF VIEW. Richard Schmitt. 2-day Lecture and Workshop. This class will examine two different aspects of 3rd person point-of-view. First, we will examine how time elements – the handling of how time passes – affect the point-of-view in "Lunch in Winter" by William Trevor and "Hey Sailor, What Ship?" by Tillie Olsen. We will also look at the endings of "Revelation" by Flannery O'Connor and "Gusev" by Chekhov to see how these endings made necessary certain point-of-view choices.

FROM THE BACK PEW TO THE PARTRIDGE SNOW CAVE TO THE HOG FARM TO THE ALTAR: Some Notes on Spiritual Autobiography. Jessie van Eerden. 2-day Seminar. Through lecture, discussion, and writing exercises, this seminar will explore the pitfalls and gifts of spiritual writing for writers with or without a religious creed. How do we shape essays about the unwritable experiences of the spirit? How do we avoid a tone that is too self-serious, too homiletic, or too derisive, indulgent in caricature? Can we interrogate our spiritual heritage and translate it into an honest work that “generates its own power” in its felt particulars, as Annie Dillard describes in *Living By Fiction*, and not a sentimental, dishonest work that “tries to rob power from the cata-racts of the given?” We’ll consider these questions and a few more. Handouts of work by David Lee, David James Duncan, Kathleen Norris, and Mary Rose O’Reiley will be supplied and discussed during the session. Required reading to be completed in advance of the session: Annie Dillard, *Holy The Firm* (Harper Perennial, 1988).

DEVELOPING A WRITTEN VOICE. Richard Schmitt. The class will focus on stylistic choices rooted in traditional rhetoric and the effects of those choices. We will seek to define and broaden some of the many interpretations of this thing writers call Voice. Ultimately, the class will be about, as always, self-definition and taking responsibility for one’s written words.

ALLUSION, DELUSION, ILLUSTRATION, TONGUE IN CHEEK AND WORK-ING CHOICES – STYLE, PARODY, TONE, SATIRE. Mark DeFoe. A wide-ranging overview of the elements of style, with attention to tone, mood, diction, sentence structure, audience, and narrative point of view. The class will consider examples from fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Students will be asked to investigate their own stylistic choices in their writing.

HOW THE POEM MOVES. Devon McNamara. This study of the strong and delicate rhythmic patterns of classic and contemporary poems examines the ways poems reveal and maintain their lively presences. Preparatory reading: *The Brass Girl Brouhaha* by Adrian Blevins (Ausable Press, 2003), “The Journey” in *An Origin Like Water* by Eavan Boland (Norton, 1996), *Dancing in Odessa* by Ilya Kaminsky (Tupelo Press, 2004), Four poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins: “The Windhover,” “Inversnaid,” “Pied Beauty,” and “Hurrahing in Harvest”

FORMS OF THE ESSAY: THE PORTRAIT. Jessie van Eerden. An exploration of strategies and ethical/philosophical concerns for writing about others’ lives in creative nonfiction. We’ll also take a look at the nature of the writer’s self-portraiture in her essays that profile others. Required Advanced Reading: A short theory piece by art critic John Berger and sample portrait essays.

WRITING THE SESTINA: AN EXERCISE IN OBSESSION, REPETITION, AND REVELATION. Doug Van Gundy. The Sestina is old French from that repeats the same six end words (in shifting order) over six sestets and a tercet. The form is challenging to write, but when successful can be particularly rewarding and revelatory for both poet and reader. Participants in this two-day workshop will read and discuss a number of sestinas (both contemporary and classic), participate in an idea-generating exercise, and write and workshop their own poems in the form.

AGAINST SENTIMENTALITY: Pathos and Emotion in Narrative Voice. Eric Waggoner. This seminar focuses on the use and deployment of pathos, or the appeal to emotion, in narrative voice (prose and poetry). In the popular mind,

we often think of “sentimentality” as the overabundance of emotion in writing. However, we might more accurately begin a discussion of sentimentality by defining it as the attempt to reduce what would realistically be a complex set of emotional responses to a single emotional response – a common problem for young writers, though one that haunts all writing. This seminar begins with the assumption that, defined in this way, “sentimental” writing oversimplifies, and in fact obscures, the complexities of the human experience as represented in literature, by attempting to force the reader’s response and engagement along a single emotive trajectory. In doing so, sentimental writing actually prevents the representation of the complex realities of human experience, resulting in writing that is not simply bad art, but in fact anti-art. This seminar will provide opportunities to discuss “bad art” critically, with an eye towards refining the writer’s ability to recognize and guard against such oversimplifying tendencies in his/her own writing.

EKPHRASIS: WRITING ABOUT PICTURES. Doug Van Gundy. 2-day Workshop. Ekphrasis isn’t only about pictures, of course, but is a rhetorical device by which one art form is used to explore, examine or comment upon another. (Keats’ “Ode on a Grecia Urn” and Audne’s “Musee de Beaux Arts” are two famous examples.) Participants will read and discuss examples of ekphrastic poems, examine the relationship between the artwork and the corresponding, and then draft and workshop their own ekphrastic poems.

SUBDUING THE SELF IN 1st PERSON POINT-OF-VIEW STORIES. 3-day Lecture and Workshop. Richard Schmitt. Note first that 1st person *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is Mark Twain’s greatest triumph, not 3rd person *Tom Sawyer*. In this class we will examine ways to provide the distance necessary to transform personal experience into fiction that stands on its own. The heart of the matter is more than a switch in pronoun or gender; we want to be able to write in 1st person if that is what the story calls for, we want to make the character someone like us if that is what the story needs. We will strive to understand ways we might ultimately be able to tell stories wholly invented and very much like our own personal stories. Handouts provided.

EXPLORING FORM. 4-day Class. Mark DeFoe. A workshop class which focuses on investigating traditional forms in poetry. The class will study classic and contemporary examples of the sonnet, the villanelle, the pantoum, and the sestina. Students will then produce their own poems modeled after these forms. The primary purpose will be to learn both the strengths and limitations of formal expression and how they might use this knowledge to enhance their poetry.

NON- FICTION FEATURE WRITING. Mark DeFoe. 5-day Workshop Class. This is a course in basic feature writing for print media. It will ask students to produce publishable non-fiction features and to submit them for publication to appropriate magazines, newspapers, and journals. Research and reporting skills will be emphasized, as well as the elements of vital, intelligent, thought-provoking and responsible journalism.

A SMALL LOOK AT THE LITTLE MAGAZINE. Mark DeFoe. 4-day Lecture Course. A look at the phenomena of the small or little magazine – its history, influence, and role in American letters. Students will be asked to explore this important element of the publishing world, with attention to three selected journals and to present their findings to the class in short critical and analytical papers and reports.

DEFT, SWIFT, INDELIBLE: THE PROSE POEM. 2-day Class and Workshop. Devon McNamara. What are these weird, compact, brash, and mysterious forms? Ways to tell a story when you can't find another (longer, fuller) shape? Jokes? Meditations? From its origins in France (Blaise Pascal) to its contemporary expressions (Margaret Atwood, Carolyn Forché, David Ignatow, Julio Cortázar), the prose poem is unique, expressing every possible and impossible human instance. Our sessions will study its many varieties, sometimes termed Flash Fiction, or Short-Short, and will include writing exercises.

VOICES SINCE THE WALL CAME DOWN. Devon McNamara. 2-day Lecture and Class. What does post-samizdat poetry and prose have to tell us about rendering new, personal, national, and global realities? The lecture's perspective includes the work of twentieth century figures whose shadows are long (Milosz, Seifert, Herbert, Szymborska, Hrabal), and emerging writers, Karasova, Olahova, Drakulic, Bagryana, as well as writings from formerly marginalized writers from cultures like the Roma.

NEWVOICES IN IRISH WRITING. 2-day Lecture and Class. Devon McNamara. The pronounced change in Irish writing in the last two decades: the presence of an international sensibility, the breaking of silences, a more flexible political, even religious, resonance invites us to see contemporary Irish literature against Ireland's vexed and brilliant literary past. New Irish poets, playwrights, fiction writers – Eavan Boland, Maeve McGuckian, Mary O'Malley, Martin McDonagh, Conor McPherson, Roddy Doyle, William Trevor – are involved in an intense dialogue with the renowned writers of the past.

ULTRA-TALK. I-DAY LECTURE. Irene McKinney. Irene explored this current direction in poetry, through the work of its most prominent poets: David Kirby, Barbara Hamby, Denise Duhamel, Albert Goldbarth, and others. Ultra-Talk is an expansive form, filling the page margin to margin, following up side issues and sudden thoughts, incorporating all kinds of "non-poetic" material, and creating a sense of space and freedom, and loose, delighted movement.

Nothing quite emerges, but it pushes up
because our deepest urges need
to come out in season. If the bee that blundered
in here had kept on growing inside his little hexagon
he would have squeezed himself to death just
by continuing. Like that, the rooms I find myself inside
are odd-shaped and functional, for awhile.

--Irene McKinney, from "Before Spring"

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